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FIVE YEARS OF SINO-AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

ANNCR: SATURDAY MARKS THE ANNIVERSARY OF AN IMPORTANT DATE [redacted] IN RELATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND PEKING. VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY HAS THESE THOUGHTS ON THE OCCASION:

VOICE:

TABLE TENNIS--- ALSO KNOWN AS PING-PONG---IS A POPULAR GAME IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. BUT NEVER, BEFORE OR SINCE, HAS IT GOTTEN THE PUBLICITY IT DID FIVE YEARS AGO---ON APRIL TENTH, NINETEEN SEVENTY-ONE---WHEN AN AMERICAN TEAM ARRIVED IN CHINA. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME AN ORGANIZED AMERICAN GROUP HAD BEEN IN MAINLAND CHINA SINCE THE MID-NINETEEN FIFTIES, AND THE FIRST TIME AMERICAN NEWSMEN HAD BEEN THERE SINCE THE COMMUNIST GOVERNME ASSUMED POWER IN NINETEEN FORTY-NINE. THE VISIT OF THE PING-PONG TEAM MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OF CHINESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE STILL NOT ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. BUT THEY HAVE OPENED LIAISON OFFICES IN EACH OTHER'S CAPITAL; TWO AMERICAN PRESIDENTS HAVE VISITED CHINA; AND THERE'S BEEN AN EXCHANGE OF JOURNALISTS, TEACHERS AND CULTURAL GROUPS. THERE'S BEEN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN TRADE AS WELL; IN FACT, AMERICAN IMPORTS OF CHINESE COTTON CLIMBED SO SHARPLY LAST YEAR THAT TEXTILE PRODUCERS HERE BECAME CONCERNED. IMPORTANT DIFFERENC OF VIEWPOINT REMAIN BETWEEN PEKING AND WASHINGTON; IDEOLOGIES ARE FAR APART; THEY HAVE CONFLICTING ESTIMATES ABOUT THE VALUE OF DETENTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION, AND THERE'S THE PROBLEM OF TAIWAN. BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT, BEGINNING WITH THE VISIT OF THE PING-PONG TEAM, SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS TURNED A CORNER; IT WAS, WITHOUT EXAGGERATION, A HISTORIC EVENT.

BUT THERE HAVE BEEN CHANGES IN CHINA OF LATE. LAST JANUARY PREMIER CHOU-EN-LAI---A PRAGMATIC SUPPORTER OF BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES---DIED, AND THERE WAS IMMEDIATE SPECULATION ABOUT WHETHER PEKING'S POLICY WOULD CHANGE UNDER A NEW LEADERSHIP. PRESS SPECULATION HAS INTENSIFIED RECENTLY AS THE NEWS FROM CHINA HAS CONTRIBUTED TO UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HOW THE NEW LEADERSHIP WILL BE DETERMINED. QUITE NATURALLY, SOME OBSERVERS SEE QUESTIONS RAISED ABOUT THE STABILITY AND FUTURE OF CHINA---AND ABOUT THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES ON PEKING'S FOREIGN POLICY.

OFFICIAL WASHINGTON, HOWEVER, IS OF THE OPINION THAT CHINA'S POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WILL PROBABLY TRANSCEND ITS INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER EXPRESSED THIS VIEW IN JANUARY AFTER THE DEATH OF CHOU-EN-LAI, AND AGAIN AT A NEWS CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY. ASKED ABOUT THE ANNOUNCEMENT FROM PEKING THAT SENIOR VICE-PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING HAD BEEN RELIEVED OF HIS POWERS---AND THAT HUA KUO-FENG HAD BEEN NAMED PREMIER--- A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN RECALLED MR. KISSINGER'S STATEMENT THAT THE BASIC FOREIGN POLICY OF BOTH CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES---DEPENDS ON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS TO BE, WITH PERSONALITIES PLAYING A SECONDARY ROLE. THEREFORE, ADDED THE SPOKESMAN, WE EXPECT THE BASIC LINES OF BOTH CHINESE AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TO CONTINUE. IN OTHER WORDS, THE INTERESTS WHICH ORIGINALLY INSPIRED THE NOW-FAMOUS PING-PONG VISIT---AND WHICH HAVE DICTATED THE SHAPE OF SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS---ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO GUIDE THEIR RELATIONS IN THE FUTURE, REGARDLESS OF INTERNAL CHANGES IN EITHER COUNTRY.

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